

Kentucky will come back from this bigger and better than ever before. I will make sure the Senate provides all the assistance we can to make sure that is a reality.

INFLATION

Now, Mr. President, on a totally different matter, Washington Democrats' printing, borrowing, and spending addiction is directly hurting American families.

Two-thirds of the American people, a supermajority, are worried about inflation. About half the middle class and 70 percent of low-income families say soaring prices have personally hurt their household. And it isn't getting better, like the Biden administration promised it would. It is actually getting worse.

Last Friday, the Labor Department released a jaw-dropping report: The consumer price index has shot up 6.8 percent over the past year; 6.8 percent inflation, the worst inflation—listen to this—the worst inflation in 40 years.

Now, it is true that the average American worker has gotten a pay increase since 2020, but rising prices have more—more—than wiped that totally out.

We have a remarkable situation where American workers are earning raises, but their bigger paychecks buy their families even less than what their smaller paychecks bought before the Democrats took power. The net effect is a nearly 2-percent pay cut for the average American.

Now, our citizens do know what is happening. Sixty-seven percent of the country says Washington needs to "cut back on spending and printing money." Let me say that again. Sixty-seven percent of the country says Washington needs to "cut back on spending and printing money."

But here in Washington, leading Democrats want to plow ahead and double down on the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that got us here. They want to respond to this stunning inflation report by printing, borrowing, and spending trillions upon trillions more on new entitlements and far-left programs.

If that weren't bad enough, on Friday, a new report showed their socialist shopping spree could cost the country trillions more than Democrats are willing to admit.

You see, as one of our Democratic colleagues explained last month, his party's bill is packed full of "shell games" and "budget gimmicks"—"shell games" and "budget gimmicks." For example, their bill pretends that major new entitlements would simply expire after a few years.

Of course, that never happens. As a wise man once said, "Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program." And Democrats aren't even pretending they think the spending would stop. They are boasting about a permanent transformation. The fake expiration dates are just an accounting trick so the pricetag looks artificially low.

And last Friday, the Congressional Budget Office announced that if we acknowledge the permanent entitlements would be permanent—in other words, tell the truth—their bill would actually cost \$4.9 trillion in the first decade alone. That is the truth of the situation. It would explode the deficit by \$3 trillion in that same 10-year period.

Democrats are trying to reassure their alarmed Members that they would find new ways to offset future extensions. But let's think about it. They have just spent months shoveling every possible pay-for into this existing bill. They already burned through huge permanent tax hikes just to partially offset the bill with the gimmicks. Extending these programs further would either explode our national debt or it would take even further trillions and even further gigantic tax hikes that Democrats are simply unwilling to specify.

So which is it, historic deficits or trillions more in secret tax hikes? The right answer for the country is neither.

Later today, every Senate Democrat is going to vote along party lines to raise our Nation's debt limit by trillions of dollars. If they jam through another reckless taxing-and-spending spree, this massive debt increase will just be the beginning: more printing and borrowing to set up more reckless spending, to cause more inflation, to hurt working families even more.

What the American people need is a break.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now, on one final matter, for months, while our colleagues have been writing their reckless taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors, the Democratic majority let the National Defense Authorization Act sit in limbo. This week, 4½ months after it was cleared by the Armed Services Committee, the Senate should finally—finally—finish this legislation.

Unfortunately, those who mean America harm haven't been waiting around for us to act. Threats to our national security are grave and getting graver. Since the Biden administration's disastrous retreat from Afghanistan, according to our top commander in the region, the U.S. military has but a small fraction of the actionable intelligence they had before the coalition withdrew.

But the predictable, avoidable resurgence of terrorist networks, of course, has continued apace. We also know that more American citizens and permanent residents remain stranded under Taliban rule than the Biden administration is willing to admit.

Meanwhile, the threat of further Russian aggression toward Ukraine is testing whether this White House and our allies in Europe will avoid misguided half measures to deter and defend against grave and growing threats.

So at the risk of stating the obvious, the United States needs to follow through with promises of urgent, substantive assistance to Ukraine and en-

courage other NATO allies to do the same thing. This should not be controversial. Only in the warped world of Kremlin propaganda is giving Ukraine the means to defend itself considered provocative.

These real threats to national security and others too numerous to name should serve as a reminder of the need for America to lead by example and commit to modernizing our own military capabilities, which in turn means taking the National Defense Authorization Act seriously.

So I am glad the Senate is finally set to vote on this crucial legislation. While the process has been imperfect, I am glad that bipartisan work has produced a bill that authorizes an increase in top-line funding for our national defense.

After months of delays, our colleagues have an opportunity to begin showing that America is serious about keeping pace with adversaries like Russia that have spent literally decades modernizing their militaries with a singular focus on countering our military advantage.

We have an opportunity to pay more than just lip service to competition with China. We have an opportunity to lay a foundation that we ought to follow through with robust and full-year Defense appropriations.

I would encourage all Senators to advance this legislation today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

TORNADOES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the monstrous chain of tornadoes and violent storms that rampaged across Illinois and five other States last Friday is a terrible reminder in America that we are all one people.

The killer storms didn't stop at State lines. They didn't discriminate based on skin color, creed, political party, or age. Among the more than 90 victims that we know of at this moment, the eldest was 86 years old; the youngest, sadly, was a tiny baby of just 5 months old.

Even as people in my State of Illinois grieve for victims in our State, we also mourn for and with all those who died and are suffering in nearby States: Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Missouri, and especially our neighbor to the south, Kentucky.

Senator MCCONNELL has spoken, and we have all seen reports, of the staggering destruction in Mayfield, KY, and other communities.

I want to say a few words about the destruction that was wreaked on my own State and also about the tremendous outpouring of compassion and community.

The National Weather Service tells us more than 30 tornadoes tore through 6 States last Friday night. The most destructive may go down as the longest continuous tornado in the history of the United States. That tornado appears to have remained on the ground for 4 hours, traveling 290 miles across